

Maintaining Good Relations with Fellow Countrymen

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Contents

Preface	5
Translator's Note	7
Maintaining Good Relations with Fellow Countrymen	9
Maintaining Healthy Contacts	27
The Qur'anic Guidance	37
How to Break the Ice?	43
Relations with Fellow Countrymen	51
Fellow Countrymen And Human Rights	55
Fellow Countrymen And Social Service	63

Preface

AMICABLE MUTUAL RELATIONS need to exist between people in a cosmopolitan set-up where one has to rub shoulders with individuals belonging to various religions and cultures. A lack of communication leads to misunderstandings and mistrust, giving rise to hatred and prejudice. The situation continues to deteriorate thereafter. Neighbours, instead of exuding love and affection for each other and showing brotherhood and concern for each other, begin to form ranks as each other's adversaries and foes. If we were to run a glance over the current social situation prevalent in our country, we are confronted with this very scene. Islam lays down some clear guidelines in this regard. It instructs us that we should treat kindly, as fellow human beings, those non-belligerent people who subscribe to a religion, creed and culture other than Islam. Going a step further, it commands us to fulfil their rights and treat them with justice in spite of differing with us in religion and creed.

Selfless service to humanity is regarded as a virtue. Islamic teachings and the illustrious examples and precedents found in the lives of the Prophet ﷺ, his respected Companions (God be pleased with them) and their followers (God have mercy on them) serve as guideposts for Muslims even to this day.

It is highly unfortunate that owing to unfamiliarity with the Islamic spirit and certain other factors, the relations of Muslims are not as cordial with their fellow countrymen as they ought to be. The burden of guilt, albeit, cannot be put on the shoulders of

Muslims alone; the media and certain other organisations are also responsible for this.

This book sheds light on these very points. It is the need of the hour that Muslims should refer to the clear instructions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the exalted example of the Prophet ﷺ and forge healthy relations with fellow countrymen. This would lead to innumerable benefits. It is because of these relations that they would be able to discharge their duty of inviting them to Islam. Mutual contact would cast off misunderstandings and mistrust and allow the Muslims to testify to the truth in word and deed. Moreover, this would also solve many an individual and community issue.

I pray that the purpose for which this book has been written is duly met.

I am grateful to Late Dr. Muhammad Rafat and Dr. Raziul Islam Nadvi for having showed interest in the compilation of this book. May God reward them for the same. Aamen.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not thank Dr. Parvez Mandviwala who has very diligently translated this booklet from Urdu into English. May Allah reward him abundantly. Aameen.

Muhammad Iqbal Mulla,
New Delhi, June 25, 2021

Translator's Note

TO ALLAH IS DUE all praise and gratitude, who is the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings be upon His trustworthy messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

It has indeed been an honour and privilege to translate this book. I have tried my best to keep this book as lively as I could; resorting to a flowing translation instead of sticking to a verbatim in English. This task is itself difficult because I was required to deviate from the idioms and phrases used in the Urdu text and, at the same time, convey the essence of those idioms in English keeping the intention of the author intact.

Although it is the ubiquitous case with all translations that the emotions and depth of words tend to get 'lost in translation', this is all the more pronounced with the Qur'an and the Hadith. These are unmatched in the richness of their language and are hence inimitable; making them extremely difficult to translate. As for the Qur'an passages interspersed in this book, I have almost always reproduced the translation offered by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Translating the Hadith is much more tedious and quite delicate an exercise because of the immense responsibility it entails. The concise sentences used by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the cherry-picked words the Prophet has utilised can never be rendered in any other language. I request the reader to not expect a perfect translation of the Hadith in any book. Having said this, I have tried my best to scout available translations of relevant aHadith from other sources to be as close to the actual

meaning as possible, but errors are inevitable. Hadith scholars append even Arabic Hadith narrations with *Au kama qala Rasool Allah ﷺ* ('or something similar to this was said by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ'). Hence, the need for this refrain to be appended with translations cannot be overemphasised. I have not inserted this caveat through the text fearing loss of continuity, but I request the reader to keep this in mind wherever and whenever he or she comes across a Hadith narration- in Arabic or any other language.

Also, and for the same reason, I have not translated terminologies like Surah and ayat/ayaat as Chapters and verse(s), as is the usual (but erroneous) practice. Instead, I have let them remain, simply transliterating them.

All said and done, whatever justice I have been able to do with the original text I owe to none but Allah, and wherever I may have erred I blame my own weaknesses.

May Allah accept this work from the author and this translator.

Dr. Parvez Mandviwala

June 21, 2021

Maintaining Good Relations With Fellow Countrymen

IN OUR COUNTRY, people other than Muslims are usually referred to as 'non-Muslims'. Their present population is around 1.1 billion and it is composed of people belonging to various religious identities and linguistic groups who follow different cultures and perform diverse rites and rituals. Muslims reside with this huge population intermingled with them like threads of a single fabric.

'*Ghair Muslim*' (non-Muslim), '*Kafir*' (disbeliever) and '*Mushrik*' (polytheist/pagan) are the words that are commonly used to refer to this population. Although these words do not carry any such meaning which would insult or ridicule or deride our fellow countrymen, they are still worth being looked into. By virtue of being servants of the same Creator and children of the same parents (Adam and Eve), it is not only the relation of humanity that they share with Muslims; they are also related to the Muslims as members of the same family. When they are referred to as disbelievers, it is germane to ask whether the Muslims have shared with them the concept of monotheism and conveyed to them the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and whether they have rejected them of their own volition after having properly understood these. Have they been duly informed of the reality and perils of polytheism and atheism and do they still prefer to cling to those ideas? The fact remains that Muslims have not discharged this duty. Hence, it is better to avoid the usage of such terminologies for them at this stage

and call them by other more appropriate names. Thus, calling them fellow countrymen or brethren and their women as compatriot sisters seems more suitable. Accordingly, this book refers to them using these very terms.

Should the Muslims maintain contact with fellow countrymen? If yes, what should be the nature of this relation? Does it suffice to have relations with them in fields like business, trade, politics and academics? What guidance does the Qur'an and the Sunnah provide in this regard?

The general perception about Muslims is that they are reserved and stay away from others, that they cannot mingle with people following a religion other than theirs and that this behaviour of theirs is because of Islam. Now it is but obvious that Islamic teachings do not concur with this attitude. Hence, this *has* to be a misinformed idea.

The above questions hold key value in determining our relation with fellow countrymen. In order to arrive at their answers, it is necessary that we delve into the actual status of Muslims and fellow countrymen and try to understand the determining factors thereof.

The Status of Muslims And Fellow Countrymen

The status of Muslims and fellow countrymen is not limited to being a minority and majority in this country. Neither do they hold the status of being adversaries of each other. By and large, the Muslims have very little idea of the real status of fellow countrymen, because of which there has always been a tense environment of misunderstandings and mistrust between them. And that is not all; all fellow countrymen are, without exception, assumed to be anti-Islam and anti-Muslim.

On the other hand, our fellow countrymen have fallen prey to serious misconceptions and prejudices against the Muslims. They have been influenced by the false propaganda carried out by the print, electronic and social media against Islam and Muslims. They consider Islam to be a reclusive religion and Muslims as a reclusive community. They presume that all that the Muslims are interested in are their own rights and privileges, their own demands and issues; that they are not in the least concerned with their fellow compatriots or their issues. It is true that once Muslims maintain relations with fellow countrymen and show an increased interest and role in solving national issues, it would naturally lead to the blossoming of a healthy relation between them and they would start seeing the Muslims as their well wishers and empathisers. Consequently, the image of Muslims would get cleared in their minds and their misunderstandings and prejudices would wane off.

The fact remains that Muslims and fellow countrymen belong to the same nation. They are the Muslims' compatriots, neighbours and their companions in this journey. They work together in the same offices, the same factories, workshops, hospitals and schools. But they have not yet been introduced to the true idea of Islam. They are unaware of the basic concepts of monotheism, prophethood and hereafter. Why, in some cases, the incorrect attitude and un-Islamic lifestyle of certain Muslims have led them to grave misunderstandings. They feel that even the Muslims regard certain entities as being as omnipotent as God. The Muslims are yet to prove to their fellow countrymen that polytheism is an erroneous and faulted idea. They are yet to explain to them the ill effects of polytheism that arise in this life and the next on the basis of sound and wise arguments. How justified is it to call them disbelievers then? In the same vein, it is also wrong to brand them all as the

bloodthirsty enemies of Islam and Muslims. In fact, there are many people out there who are yearning for the truth and wandering in its quest. They are certainly not anti-Muslim.

The Muslims are not just a religious minority or a linguistic group. They are an international and universal community with a distinct set of ideology and principles. God Almighty has selected them to convey the message of Islam to all humanity. They have, hence, been referred to in the Qur'an as *khair-e-ummat* (best of people), *ummat-e-wasat* (the intermediate people) and *shuhda'a ala an'naas* (witness unto mankind). The Muslims are the final Ummah of the final Messenger on earth. Now no new prophet or messenger would be sent to us till the end of time. Similarly, no new Ummah would be raised either. The onus of testifying to Islam and conclusively inviting people to Islam lays on the shoulders of none but the Muslims, who are expected to do so on both- an individual and collective basis. This is their *raison d'être* and the very purpose of their existence. On the Day of Judgement, they would not be able to excuse themselves or save themselves from being held accountable for any act of omission in discharging this responsibility, regardless of whatever else they might have achieved in this world.

This makes it clear that there exists a strong link and association between the Muslims and fellow countrymen. These are the inviters and they are the invitees. Neither are they their adversaries nor their opponents. Rather, the Muslims are the carriers of a message and an invitation, whereas the fellow countrymen are the primary addressees of this message and invitation.

A Few Common Points

There are quite a few strong foundations on which relations with fellow countrymen can be established. We need to consider the following points in this regard which are common between the two of us.

We both belong to the same Creator, Master and Lord. It is not that the Muslims have been created by one God and they have been created by another. He alone is the Lord of them all. He is the sole and undisputed Creator of the entire creation and universe.

We share a common parentage, being children of Adam and Eve (Peace be upon them). This is the reason why the entire creation has been called the 'family of God'. This makes all human beings brothers.

We also share a common nationality. The success and prosperity of Indians is the concern of each of them. In case any of them is harmed or becomes a target of God's wrath, everyone would be left affected. It is as if people are sailing on a large ship. If this ship reaches the coast safely, they would all have completed a successful voyage. However, if this ship meets with an accident or capsizes in a storm, they would all perish.

The Muslims and the fellow countrymen belong to religious communities; which means that they believe in some religion or the other, consider religion an indivisible part of their lives and cannot imagine leading a life without religion.

The fellow countrymen are the addressees and the Muslims are answerable. In other words, the ideology, creed and message the Muslims carry is not their private property or their family treasure; it is the common asset of all mankind. The Muslims

are its trustees, not its owners or masters. Hence, it is necessary for them to discharge this trust at the earliest and give the fellow countrymen their due. For this, the Muslims would have to shed their earlier perspective of fellow countrymen and adopt the correct perspective in light of Islamic teachings. They would then have to go a step further and introduce themselves to them, engage with them, maintain healthy contacts and communicate with them. It is only after this that inviting them to Islam can be possible. These are the most basic and fundamental things that need to be done in order to forge relations with them, failing which there can be no correspondence whatsoever. We should engage with and establish relations with even those people and organisations who subscribe to communal and fascist ideologies. Maintaining distances with them under the sole assumption that they are our adversaries and anti-Islam goes against the very precepts of Islam and the precedent set by the Prophet ﷺ.

Until and unless the Muslims rise above the existing level of contact they share with fellow countrymen and reform their attitude and line of thinking, there is little hope that the message of Islam would ever reach them.

It is Necessary to Have the Right Attitude

Whatever has been written above makes it apparent that the Muslims have developed a narrow perspective of fellow countrymen in their minds. There certainly are some historic, social and political factors that have helped develop it, but this is not the occasion to delve into their details. The Muslims, except for a few, think on communal lines. Islamic teachings, on the other hand, expect them to reflect on a higher, universal plane based on human values.

What the Muslims, by and large, think and say is:

- *Our Allah or our God.*
- *Our Messenger, while referring to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.*
- *Our Book, while referring to the Holy Qur'an (as if there are some other books for other people).*
- *Our Religion, while referring to Islam (as if there are some other religions for other people).*

It is true- and the Muslims are fortunate on this count- that they believe in the unity of God. They consider it utmost unjust to assign partners to God in His divinity, His attributes and His rights and authority. Associating someone with God is the greatest of sins. If a man persists upon it till his last breath and dies without turning back in repentance, God has foretold that He would not forgive him. It is also true that the Muslims regard Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the last and final messenger of God. They, exclusive of everyone else, have the Qur'an with them in its original, unadulterated form. The Muslims believe in Islam, the religion ordained by God. God has not prescribed any *other* religion for the rest of mankind; He has ordained the same Islam for them all. The Creator of those human beings who are not Muslim and, indeed, the Creator of everything else is none but the same God whom the Muslims call Allah. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been sent by God as a mercy to all mankind, nay, to the entire world, till the end of time. No separate prophet has been sent for those people who are not Muslim. Their success in this world and salvation in the hereafter is hinged upon believing in Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and following him in all walks of life.

It is very important for us to understand these points. Along with this, it is also equally important to dispel the doubts and

misunderstandings regarding fellow countrymen that we have harboured in our minds. Without this, it would be impossible to proceed with maintaining relations with them or inviting them to Islam.

Having said that, kindly consider the following position with regards the aforementioned points:

- God alone is the Creator, Master and Lord of all mankind and all forms of creation.
- Islam is the religion ordained by God for all mankind. Those who accept it are called Muslims.
- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the last and final messenger sent to all mankind till the end of time. No other messenger would now be sent to guide mankind. Those who profess their faith in him would be called Muslims.
- The Qur'an is meant for all mankind and it is the final book revealed by God for man's guidance. No other book would now be revealed by God for man's guidance. He who believes in the Qur'an would be called a Muslim.
- Muslims are the final Ummah (acolytes of a prophet). No other Ummah would now be commissioned till the last day. The very purpose of this Ummah's existence is to bear witness to the true religion by their words and deeds and to present Islam before mankind in such a conclusive manner that they would be able to testify before God on the Day of Judgement that they have followed the religion God had revealed through His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to the hilt, and have left no stone unturned in inviting fellow countrymen towards it, and by doing so they have discharged their due responsibility. Such should be their case that day that the fellow countrymen would testify to the fact that the Muslims had indeed discharged their duty.

These great blessings (Islam and the Qur'an) are as common for all mankind as His other blessings are. They have not been restricted to some particular community, group or region. If the Muslims try to restrict these blessings to those who have been born in Muslim households and deprive all others from benefiting from them, they would be held guilty of misappropriating a trust handed to them by God, which is a tremendous sin. They would then have to pay for it not only in this world but also in the hereafter in the form of His wrath and strict accountability. The severe issues and dangers that the Muslims are being subjected to these days are a consequence of this very misappropriation and crime.

The Qur'an has been very explicit in this regard. It says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ
لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّعْنُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

"Indeed, those who conceal what We have revealed, and the guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book- on them shall be God's curse and the curse of those entitled to curse." [Al-Baqarah 2: 159]

This ayah tells us that the illustrious guidance and teachings God has revealed are meant for the entire human race. In today's times, Muslims are the trustees of this great blessing. It is their responsibility to pass it on to fellow human beings instead of keeping it concealed with them. Muslims would be held liable for the misguidance of those people who have been left bereft of divine guidance. This illustrious guidance is nothing but the true religion.

God says in the Qur'an:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

"Who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from God? But God is not unmindful of what you do!"

[Al-Baqarah 2: 140]

Those who conceal the truth instead of publicising it have been called the most unjust of men. The severity of this injustice and crime can be gauged from the fact that those who would be the victims of this injustice (i.e. the fellow countrymen) would have to bear with eternal torments in the hereafter because of their disbelief and polytheism. If the victims of this injustice would be punished so severely, would the perpetrators of this injustice be left off unscathed?

How can someone convey Islam to fellow countrymen and testify to the truth while remaining away from them? Unless there is a proper two-way communication, there is no way they can be invited to Islam, and this is only possible once we have a mutual correspondence and relations with them.

The Nature of Our Relations with Fellow Countrymen

There is a specific nature of our relation and communication with fellow countrymen. Whenever a person builds up relations with another person, it is usually based on some personal or familial or community interest. However, the relation we are talking about is based purely on the need to convey the message of Islam to fellow countrymen, so that they might be saved from going wayward in this life and from infernal punishments in the hereafter. The only driving factor here is the attainment of

God's good pleasure. They too are God's servants and human beings; it is their right that God's religion be conveyed to them.

This means that such relations would be absolutely selfless in nature. These gestures with fellow countrymen would be purely empathetic in nature; they would be for their own good, for their development, progress and success in this life and salvation in the next. They would be intended at conclusively inviting them to Islam in a way that all efforts would have been exhausted towards this endeavour.

What was the real motive behind the prophets' efforts at propagating Islam? The Qur'an has touched upon this at several places. For instance:

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

"I do not ask you of any reward for it; my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds."

[Ash-Shu'ara 26: 109]

وَيَقُولُوا لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَا لَا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ

"O my people! I ask you for no wealth in return; my reward is from none but God."

[Hud 11: 29]

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

"Say: No reward do I ask of you for this, nor am I a pretender."

[Saad 38: 86]

Thus, the circle of our contacts is not at all limited; on the contrary, it is quite vast. Apart from personal individual contacts, contacts can also be established on the family and social level. Worldly benefits or vested personal and material interests should not be involved; our intentions should be absolutely pure, we should be their sincere well-wishers.

Had the Muslims not been an evangelist community, had they merely been just another minority community, they would also have been free to forge relations in the narrow interests of their community, group and sect and pursue material benefits. They, however, are the torchbearers of the message of the One True God. They have been appointed for the task of conclusively inviting people to Islam so that people might not argue in front of God saying 'We had no knowledge of Your religion. It is the Muslims who are responsible for our waywardness. They acted as miserly custodians of Your message; neither did they benefit from it themselves, nor did they convey it to us. So if we are being held guilty today of leading a rebellious life on earth, the Muslims also ought to share in our punishment, for it is they who had deprived us of the truth.'

In short, our relations with fellow countrymen are not a mere formality, nor are they casual encounters. Rather, the primary and most important purpose of establishing those relations is to invite them to Islam and convey the message of truth to them, to make it clear to them that associating others with God in His divinity and subscribing to false ideologies would have a devastating effect on their life and hereafter.

Maintaining relations with fellow countrymen does have its worldly benefits as well, which we would discuss later.

The Present State of Affairs

Muslims and fellow countrymen have been staying in this country since several centuries. Neighbours have generally had cordial brotherly relations with each other. It has been common for them to visit each other's homes, share each other's problems and consult with each other, to the point that they used to take each other's advice even while seeking matrimonial

alliances for their children. Muslims and fellow countrymen have been business partners and Eids have been incomplete without having them as guests.

A healthy relation between neighbours is necessary and beneficial for both of them. It is also important for maintaining peace and security in the country, for its progress and development and for the promotion of wellness and goodwill in society.

However, the current nature and state of relations between Muslims and fellow countrymen is not exactly pleasant. Relations are being spoiled at a regular pace. Hatred, prejudice and distances are on the rise. There is a long history behind it. It is not taking place on its own; rather, there are some organisations, institutions and individuals who are working on it in the form of a planned agenda. We have its bitter consequences before us. Riots used to happen in the past as well, but riots have been duly orchestrated and engineered at various places in these past couple of years. Not only have the rioters and anti-social elements not been arrested or punished, but they have actually been felicitated!

The rift between Muslims and fellow countrymen is widening by the day. Agents of hate engage in mass murders and rape innocent women to promote their politics and garner the votes of fellow countrymen. What a pitiful situation! The inflammatory speeches of 'religious' leaders have turned many individuals of the majority community against the minority community, and against Muslims in particular. They are least concerned with the volatile issues their speeches have plunged our society and country into. They have chosen to ignore the fact that those societies which inflict injustice and oppression upon its innocent citizens are met with divine wrath. Mistrust, enmity and hatred are developing between those who have been

living happily and peacefully as neighbours since centuries together. They have begun to doubt each other's intentions. False and baseless propaganda like Love-jihad and population explosion, and false rumours related to beef consumption and other sensitive matters are adding fuel to the fire. There have been instances where mobs have taken the law in their own hands and lynched innocent people. We have also had cases where people were murdered and their dead bodies were found hanging from trees.

Some members of the minority community, including Muslims, have occasionally spoken of taking revenge and issued stern statements. But by and large, the Muslims have displayed commendable patience and forbearance; they have not retaliated by spreading hatred, nor have they incited anyone to take up arms. They should continue to exercise restraint under all conditions.

The ruling class is conspicuously silent. The policemen almost always act like mute spectators, or worse, they act in a biased manner. They let off the rioters, criminals and murderers, and instead nab the innocent folks under false cases.

Saffronization of history, culture and education and a series of imprudent decisions taken by the ruling class on the official and unofficial levels have caused a lot of distress. Fascism is clearly taking roots in this democratic nation. Attempts have been made at curbing dissent, putting an end to personal liberty, squashing freedom of expression and silencing critics. Certain intellectuals have even been murdered and their murderers have not been apprehended. The intention of the state governments and police to punish the culprits is also in question.

Innocent Muslims are being picked up from all over the country and thrown behind bars on false charges of terrorism. The media is being used to spread sensational news aimed at

infusing fear and panic among fellow countrymen. This exposes the prejudiced and biased role of the police that breeds on hatred. Given a few exceptions, the condemnable attitude of the administration and secret services is in complete contravention of the precepts of law and justice. The appalling violation of human rights served to be the final nail in the coffin.

Relying on the false news dished out by the media and police, most fellow countrymen have come to believe that Muslims are terrorists and disloyal to this nation, their religion preaches against peace, security and human civilization. Given this situation, how can fellow countrymen be expected to nurture their relations with Muslims? This situation spells a disaster for the country, and it has taken a toll on the Muslims' psyche as well, making them very anxious of their fate. They are generally less inclined towards breaking the ice and establishing relations with fellow countrymen.

But there is also a positive side to this story. There is a sizeable number of fellow countrymen all over the country who are genuinely concerned with this situation and disturbed by it. This includes intellectuals, scientists, writers and analysts, artists and poets, social activists, politicians and religious leaders. They are deeply agitated by what the minorities- especially the Muslims- are facing in the country and empathise with them. In the face of human rights violations, oppression and riots, these brave men and women risk their lives to work for the minorities in general and Muslims in particular. They are upright ladies and gentlemen and peace loving friends of humanity. It would be naïve of us to deprive ourselves of their support and concern. In fact, we should go out of our way to establish contacts with such fellow countrymen and meet them with heartfelt gratitude. We should sit with them to chalk out a road map for lasting peace and security. Mr. Malik Habibullah writes:

"We should acknowledge the fact that we have very limited contacts and relations with our non-Muslim brethren. And there is an acute absence of warmth and depth in whatever relations that do exist. We should instead establish warm brotherly relations with them, and these relations should be based on utmost sincerity, fraternity, empathy and goodwill."

For this, the first thing we need to do is engage in a deep study of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and try to understand God's will with regards his servants. How does He treat His devout servants? How did the Prophet ﷺ deal with the sincere devotees of God? What approach has he ﷺ taught his followers to adopt? Answers to these questions would make it easier for us to establish and maintain the desired relation with them with all our heart's conviction.

The Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ①

"O mankind, fear your Lord who created you from a single person, and created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered countless men and women. Fear God, through whom you demand your mutual rights and have regard for relationships. Indeed, God ever watches over you."

[An-Nisa'4:1]

In this ayat, God has strictly instructed His servants on two counts- one, to fear the Lord, and the other to have regard for human relations. He has then cautioned us that He is watching us, He is cognizant of our state, He is seeing how much we fear Him and how much regard for human relations we actually have. Our non-Muslim brethren are a part of these human

relations; they cannot be exempted from this list. In Surah Luqman, God has said that we are not supposed to obey our pagan parents in practising polytheism; but at the same time, He has also instructed us to 'treat them kindly'. We are both bound by human relationships. They have certain rights over us. Just as we are expected to fear our Lord, we are also expected to have regard for the rights of these relations, lest we dishonour their rights and end up being held accountable for it.

The Qur'an also says:

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ
بِالْجُنُبِ وَالْإِنْسَانِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

"Serve God, and join not partners with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer you meet, and what your right hands possess." [An-Nisa' 4: 36]

The first ayah combines the fear of God with having regard for relationships. This ayah combines servitude with good behaviour. And the long list presented here does not make any distinction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim; we are expected to behave kindly with- one and all.

[Insani Ukhuwwat pp. 4-5]



Maintaining Healthy Contacts

STAYING ALOOF FROM fellow countrymen and having no contacts with them despite living with them in the same city, the same locality and the same colony carries with it a number of problems. Distances breed doubts and mistrust. If this continues, the Muslims would become isolated, misunderstandings and prejudices would keep increasing, and even a minor scuffle would spark off deadly riots.

Certain important aspects of the need and importance of maintaining healthy relations with fellow countrymen have been discussed below.

Peace and Security in Society and the Nation

Preservation of peace and security in society, safeguard of everyone's life and property, establishment of law and order, eradication of oppression and injustice- these are those fundamental requirements that are all equally vital and necessary. The establishment of society on sound foundations and its progress can only be possible in an environment of peace and justice, respect for humanity and a sense of mutual empathy. If, instead, we have a contrary situation, the social fabric would be thrown into tatters.

The Muslims cannot achieve these objectives on their own; they need to team up with fellow countrymen to plan out a combined struggle. They should know that there are many fellow countrymen who take interest in such endeavours, extend their

cooperation, help with required resources and devote their time to work on the ground. We get an opportunity to communicate with them when we work with them in the light of Islamic teachings. They can be positively influenced by our good behaviour and conduct. The participation of fellow countrymen would give a major boost to the establishment and preservation of sustainable peace. Such a healthy environment would also be conducive in explaining the Islamic ideology to them.

It is necessary for us to introduce the fellow countrymen with the message and teachings of Islam. We find the following guidelines in the Qur'an:

وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ
أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

"If any of the pagans ask you for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the word of Allah, and then escort him to where he can be secure. This is because they are men without knowledge." [At-Taubah 9: 6]

In other words, if any of the pagans want to understand Islam, for which they wish to listen to the Qur'an, they should be given all the opportunity to do so. Even if they desist from accepting Islam, they should be escorted to their locality with all due care.

These guidelines were revealed in a state of war. From this, the importance of maintaining relations with fellow countrymen in a state of peace can very well be imagined. We also come to know that they should be given copies of the Qur'an in peaceful conditions, so that they might go through it. We should gain opportunities of reciting the translation of the Qur'an to them.

Human Rights of Fellow Countrymen

Being children of Adam and Eve, the fellow countrymen share a familial bond with Muslims. It is mentioned in a Hadith that the Prophet ﷺ used to recite the following words after his prayers:

"O our Lord, and the Lord of everything, I bear witness that you alone are the Master, being Alone, without a partner... O our Lord, and the Lord of everything, I bear witness that all human beings are brothers unto each other."

[Abu Dawood, Ahmad]

Islam has laid down a clear charter of human rights. It is incumbent and binding upon the Muslims to honour and fulfil the rights of all human beings in the light of these teachings, irrespective of their religion and creed, language, race and colour. This is as important an obligation as other religious obligations are. They are required to raise their voices and protest against injustice and oppression and to help the oppressed, regardless of who the oppressor is.

The protection of fellow countrymen's human rights, courteous treatment with those who have not done you any wrong, interest in common human issues, helping the needy and offering them sincere advice are some of Islam's fundamental teachings. But there are many Muslims who have forgotten these teachings; they hardly act upon them. There are many places where fellow countrymen are our neighbours, our business partners or our colleagues in offices, schools, hospitals etc. Sharing their joys and sorrows and giving them gifts are those gestures that are highly recommended. These gestures have become all the more important in contemporary times. But how can all this be possible if we lack basic communication with them? We should be convinced of the need and importance of these gestures. We should prepare ourselves to fulfil this

obligation of conveying the message of Islam to fellow countrymen just as we fulfil our obligations of worship. Healthy contacts would allow fellow countrymen to witness the Muslims' morals and conduct, their etiquette and approach. They would experience first hand their piety, their concern for humanity and their peace loving attitude. As a result, they would be impressed with Islam. We have seen that once contacts get established, most of them turn out to be good people, good neighbours, peace-loving and decent men.

Encouraging Goodness And Eradicating Evil

It is an important sign of a healthy, righteous and ideal society that goodness prevails in it and evil is eradicated from its midst. Goodness, virtue, kindness and righteousness are things that everyone appreciates and values, for they are in accordance with human nature. Evil, on the contrary, is something that human nature and conscience detests. Another sign of such a society is that it is free of oppression and injustice; there is a general environment of justice, law and order. Such a society is free of exploitation.

Our country is a plural society. Here, it is not the sole responsibility of any particular community or group to stand by these lofty ideals. And it is not even practically possible. It is, rather, the collective responsibility of all members of society to come together and strive towards it. It is not that there is some particular religious community or sect that is in exclusive need of attaining these objectives; this is the need of each and every member of society. The Muslims should assume an important and leading role in this struggle. The Qur'an, in the very second ayah of Surah Al-Maidah, commands us to assist each other in righteousness and piety, and to refrain from cooperating with

others in sin and transgression. If Muslims increase their contacts with fellow countrymen, they can cooperate with them to successfully achieve public welfare goals. The participation of fellow countrymen would boost their morale and strengthen them.

All members of society and all the sects and denominations would reap the various benefits of the aforementioned practice. Alternatively, if this important work is left neglected, not one sect or religious group would be spared the bitter fruits of this neglect. Certain evils are so devastating that there is an imminent danger of encountering divine punishments if attempts are not made to eradicate them. Details of such evils can be found in the Qur'an and Hadith. Is it possible to make such attempts without cooperating with the fellow countrymen or by maintaining distances from them? Certainly not!

A lack of communication with fellow countrymen and the absence of joint attempts at promoting virtue in society have led to a deluge of evil, injustice and oppression. As a result, every member of our society is disturbed and is facing various issues. And there is no one who can think of any solution to these issues.

A Vicious and Venomous Propaganda

Some naïve individuals and organisations have embarked upon a vicious propaganda campaign against the Muslims on print, electronic and social media.

They want to convince the Indians- especially our fellow countrymen- that Islam and Muslims are an existential threat, that Muslims are engaged in terrorist activities, that they are opposed to peace and are enemies of the majority community,

that they are disloyal to the nation, that they keep themselves away from the other citizens of this country, and that all they are interested in are their personal religious matters.

You can very well imagine the disastrous consequences this venomous and false propaganda can lead to if not addressed in time. If the fellow countrymen perceive the Muslims as enemies and are sceptical of their intentions, it can lead to severe problems. Instead of adopting an attitude of empathy and fraternity, they would both develop enmity, rancour and hatred for each other. Peace and security would be compromised and there would be widespread human rights violation on both sides. This would adversely affect both parties. The only solution to this is to counter this propaganda and to falsify it.

For this to happen, it is utmost necessary for Muslims to have channels of communication with fellow countrymen at all levels. If they both keep their distances from each other, if they keep away from meeting each other and sharing each other's joys and sorrows, doubts and misgivings would erupt between them and there would be an air of mutual mistrust. In this volatile environment, a small incident would have the potential to spark off bloody riots, gutting down peace and security with it.

Another important benefit of maintaining close relations with fellow countrymen is that we would get an opportunity of participating in their various programmes, conferences and meetings. We can gain from sharing our views and interacting with them in such sessions. This would allow us to clear the misconceptions and false impressions spread by the media. I have had a delightful experience some months back. An upper class, educated lady from a prominent Uttar Pradesh city called us up and introduced herself over phone. She told us that she has received a book published by the Dawah department of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind titled '*Manavjeevan aur Parlok*' (Human life

and the Hereafter) and has gone through it. After reading the initial pages, the lady realised that the role of the media has been quite disappointing. She could not understand why they are brewing and spreading hatred against the Muslims. She was all praise for the book and was impressed with the perspective presented therein.

To sum it up, there are innumerable benefits of interacting and maintaining contacts with fellow countrymen. Continuing with our baseless approach of maintaining distances, hatred and apathy would only compound our problems instead of providing us with any solution whatsoever.

A vicious propaganda was being conducted in Makkah against Islam and the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. But did that force the Prophet and his companions into hiding? Did they lock themselves in their homes? Did they stop interacting with the Makkan disbelievers and polytheists? They were forced into exile upon being socially boycotted for three dreadful years. Even during these hard times, the Prophet and his companions continued to meet and interact with the tribal heads and common folk, increased their contacts and won them over by their pristine morals. It was this that opened up ways for people to accept Islam. All tools of propaganda were thus laid waste and the enemies of Islam began collapsing one after another.

Once people would understand the truth, they would stop getting influenced by the misunderstandings spread by media and other such outlets. But if we do not meet them or improve our contacts with them, these misunderstandings, mistrust, hatred and prejudices would keep increasing.

Despite the relentless and ceaseless efforts of certain communal and fascist forces, most of the fellow countrymen still do not subscribe to their ideology. Hence, these forces have as yet been unsuccessful in achieving their ugly objectives. At the same

time, it is also true that we are witnessing a gradual increase in prejudices, hatred and anti-Muslim sentiment. There is one important aspect that we need to focus on. Despite all their unfortunate and damaging activities we should not discontinue our relations with those who subscribe to these communal and fascist ideologies. We should continue meeting their groups, leaders, intellectuals and important personalities and keep touch with them. It is because we do not do this that they tend to justify and stand by their misinformed concepts about Islam and Muslims. They can even change their views after sustained meetings and dialogue. There have been certain instances where they have confessed that they had been brainwashed with false information and have expressed their regret over it. I have personally experienced many such cases. We met them in the form of a delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, once, twice. We had a decent discussion with them. We freely exchanged our views on certain issues. Islam was also introduced to them. The general reaction we gathered was quite positive. They even expressed the need and importance for such meetings and discussions and appreciated these endeavours.

We should not forget that communal and fascist forces are but a very small part of this country's vast population. We have an overwhelming population of those who are not attached to them and detest their ideology, philosophy and activities. While we should definitely abhor the injustice meted out by tyrants and the corruption unleashed by miscreants, we should also make attempts at reforming them.

Look how explicitly and beautifully the Qur'an explains this:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي
بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾

"Goodness and evil are not alike. Repel the evil with what is better. Then, the two of you- between whom was hatred- would become as if you were intimate friends."

[HaMeem Sajdah 41:34]

Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, while commenting on this ayat, writes:

"In order to understand the complete import of this ayat, we should keep in mind the situation in which the Prophet ﷺ and by extension, his followers- were offered this guidance. The situation at that time was that the call to Islam was met with extreme hostility and stern violent opposition, in which all limits of morality, humanity and decency had been violated. Every possible lie was being uttered against the Prophet and his companions. Everything was being done to defame him and to turn the people against him. Various allegations were being hurled against him. There was an army of trolls whose only task was to perpetuate a negative propaganda against him and sow mistrust in the minds of unassuming people. The Prophet and his companions were subjected to all kinds of torments, fed up with which, a good number of Muslims had been forced to seek refuge in a foreign land. As part of the anti-Islam programme, a group of nuisance creators had been kept ready to create chaos and commotion every time he opened his blessed mouth to preach Islam so that his addresses could not hear him speak. These were such trying and discouraging times that all avenues of preaching Islam seemed shut upon them. It was at this time that the Prophet ﷺ was given this formula to counter the opposition.

The first thing that he was told was that goodness and evil are not alike. In other words, no matter how terrific a storm of evil your opponents might have built up against you and no matter how meek and helpless goodness might seem against it, evil is inherently weak by its very nature, forcing it to eventually bow down. For, as long as human beings have the element of humanity retained within them, they cannot but hate evil. Even the torch bearers of evil know very well that they are liars,

oppressors and are being arrogant for their own selfish interests. This attitude makes them fall in their own eyes, let alone making them stand tall in the eyes of others. They develop a guilty conscience that keeps pricking them and weakens their resolve whenever they plan or do anything bad. If goodness and virtue- that *prima facie* appears weak and helpless against this deluge of evil- keeps continuing with its work, it eventually triumphs. This is because goodness, by its very nature, is a power that influences hearts and minds. No matter how bad a person is, he cannot help but acknowledge its value in his heart. Then, when goodness and evil confront each other and their qualities become evident upon others after a prolonged struggle, there remain very few people who do not develop a hatred for evil and turn acolytes of goodness.

The second thing that this ayah tells us is that we should not only repel evil with plain goodness, but that we should do so with a goodness which is of a higher grade. What this means is that if a person does something bad to you and you forgive him, this would be an example of plain goodness. A higher grade of goodness would be to treat kindly the person who has done something bad to you whenever you get an opportunity to do so."



Relations With Fellow Countrymen The Qur'anic Guidance

IT IS WRONG to assume that the Qur'an outright forbids the Muslims from establishing relations with all those people who believe in some other religion or belong to other communities.

لَا يَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ
دِيَارِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوْا اِلَيْهِمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ۝ اَمَّا
يَنْهٰكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ قَتَلُوْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ وَآخَرَجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ
وَضَلُّوْا عَلٰى اٰخَرٰجِكُمْ اَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۙ ۙ

"God does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of your faith and do not expel you from your homes- from being righteous towards them and acting justly towards them. Indeed, God loves those who act justly. God only forbids you from those who fight you because of your faith and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion- that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, it is those who are the wrongdoers."

[Al-Mumtahana 60: 8-9]

Maulana Abu Ala Maududi explains these ayaat thus:

"A person might ask here that 'while it is understood that we should act righteously with non-belligerent disbelievers, are we also required to act

justly with only the non-belligerent disbelievers? Does it imply that we should act unjustly with the belligerent ones?

The answer to this question is that the word justice has been used here in a specific context. What it means is that it is the requirement of justice that if a person does not show enmity towards you, you should also not show enmity towards him. Giving enemies and non-enemies the same status and treating them similarly is not justice. You have all the right to adopt a strict attitude with those who have oppressed you because of your faith and forced you into exile and kept troubling you even after that. However, justice demands that you should be kind to those who have had no part to play in this, and fulfil the rights of family and community ties that they are entitled to."

Explaining the next ayat, he writes:

"The previous ayah spoke of severing ties with certain disbelievers. Some people might erroneously presume that this is because of their disbelief. Hence, this ayah was revealed to clarify that the actual reason for this is not their disbelief. Rather, it is because of their enmity with Islam and Muslims and the tyranny they had resorted to. Thus, the Muslims should differentiate between a belligerent disbeliever and a non-belligerent disbeliever. They ought to deal kindly with those disbelievers who have never wronged them. This is best illustrated by the example of Lady Asma bint Abu Bakr (God be pleased with them) and her disbelieving mother.

One of Abu Bakr's wives, Qutailah bint Abdul Uzza was a disbeliever and continued to reside in Makkah even after the emigration. Lady Asma was her daughter. Since after the Hudaibiyah truce it became easier for the people of Makkah and Madinah to interact with each other, she came to Madinah to meet her daughter and also brought her some gifts. Lady Asma relates that I went to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him if I can meet my mother. And can I observe good family relations with her? The Prophet replied in the affirmative.

[Musnad Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim]

Her son, Abdullah ibn Zubair (God be pleased with him) elaborates further. He narrates that Lady Asma had refused to meet her mother. She met her only once she received the permission of God and His Messenger. [Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Jareer and Ibn Abi Hatim]

This implies that it is permissible for a Muslim person to serve his disbelieving parents and help his disbelieving siblings and relatives, provided they are not enemies of Islam. Similarly, charity can be given to poor dhimmis (non-Muslim residents of an Islamic state)."

[Ahkaam al-Qur'an, alJassas- Rooh alMa'ani]

[Tafheem al Qura'an vol 5. pp. 433,434]

While explaining this ayat, Allamah Shabbir Ahmad Usmani writes:

"This means that it is not at all beyond God's power and mercy to turn those disbelievers who are the worst of your enemies to Islam, which would then lead to the establishment of friendship and brotherhood between you. This is exactly what happened during the Conquest of Makkah. Almost all the residents of Makkah accepted Islam. Those who were killing each other began laying down their lives for each other.

There were some others in Makkah who had not accepted Islam, but they did not harbour any rancour or contempt against those who had accepted Islam either. Neither did they fight them for their faith, nor did they help the oppressors in causing them trouble or evicting them. Islam does not prevent anyone from behaving kindly and generously with them. It is the very requirement of justice that you should mete out good treatment to those who are kind and receptive towards you, and present before the world the high moral standards of Islam. Islam does not teach us to paint all disbelievers with the same brush; if a group of disbelievers is at war with the Muslims it does not mean that we would treat the non-belligerent ones as our enemies as well. Doing so would go against the precepts of prudence and justice."

[Tafseer Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, p. 729]

God says in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ
شِدَانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ آلَا تَعْدِلُوا إِعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

"O you who believe, stand firm for God, testifying to justice. And let not the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just, that is closest to piety." [Al-Maidah 5: 8]

While explaining the clause, 'let not the hatred of a people prevent you from being just', Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi writes:

"This clause cautions us against the biggest hurdle in the path to righteousness and justice. Let not our enmity for a nation or its hostile attitude towards us make us swerve from being righteous and just. The weapon that Satan has used most often to make man wander off the straight path is this very enmity. It was nothing but their enmity against the Children of Ismael and the Muslims that had led the Jews to violate all the oaths and covenants that they were obligated with. It is for this reason that the Muslims have been told to beware of this satanic scheme. They should abide by the same yardstick and scale in judging friends and foes.

'Be just, that is closest to piety.' This means that the thing that suits piety- which is the crux of Islam and Shariah, and the deciding factor in judging every Muslim's word and deed- is that despite the enmity one has against his enemy, he should not adopt an approach that conflicts with truth and justice." [Tadabbur-e-Qur'an Vol 2. p. 471]

Wherever the Qur'an forbids us from establishing relations with non-Muslims, the context in which it says so needs to be understood. Under the topic, 'The context of those injunctions

that forbid relations with non-Muslims', Maulana Jalaluddin Umari writes:

"After getting acquainted with the unparalleled Islamic stand about maintaining relations with non-Muslims and fulfilling their rights in spite of all the differences of faith and ideology we have with non-Muslims, there is a question that arises, or is rather made to arise in one's mind- that the Qur'an has also spoken about severing relations with them as well. How can those ayaat be dismissed? The matter gets all the more serious when it speaks of waging war and jihad against its adversaries. This question is raised repeatedly on various occasions in so many different ways that it seems as if war and bloodshed against non-Muslims is the primary teaching of the Qur'an and that the very purpose for which the Qur'an had been revealed was to chop off the head of its dissenters.

The context and situation in which those ayaat of the Qur'an which instruct us not to maintain relations with the non-Muslims have been revealed is completely different. If this context is ignored, there is a very good possibility of falling prey to misunderstandings; and deliberately ignoring that context gives rise to a cascade of unwarranted objections. Why, this can even be, and indeed is, misused to tarnish the pristine and perspicuous teachings of Islam. Hence, in order to understand those ayaat, it is imperative that we keep in mind the context in which they have been revealed.

Kindly recollect the initial days of Islam when its message began to gradually spread out among the people, resulting in a small Islamic state being formed in the city of Madinah. This development led to an acute sense of anxiety and restlessness in the enemy ranks. The winds of fury began blowing in from all directions with unforeseen might. The pagans and Jews and Christians put aside their mutual differences to form a united bloc against the Muslims. They laid a trap of conspiracies and a

perennial state of war was created. They openly resorted to every single strategy that could be used to annihilate the Muslims.

Under these conditions, the Muslims were asked to remain steadfast and deal with the situation with fortitude, their responsibility towards Islam was made clear to them and they were told that they should steer clear from those people who are enemies of Islam and wish to uproot it from the face of the earth. They were told that taking them as intimate friends and having an emotional inclination towards them goes against the essence of faith.

The hypocrites were also unmasked, and the true believers were told that they should guard themselves of their imminent conspiracies. These are wolves in sheep's clothing, and more dangerous than known enemies. Hence, maintaining relations with these overt and covert enemies of Islam was not only against the precepts of faith, it was also suicidal and disastrous from the strategic point of view. Such relations posed a serious threat to the Islamic state. The security interests of the state assumed paramount importance. No government would ever allow its citizens to establish intimate relations with the enemy, engage in secret dealings with it, equip it with intelligence or to become a part of its conspiracies and strategies- either directly or indirectly. This background and context has very clearly been stated in and around all those ayaat of the Qur'an that forbid Muslims from maintaining relations with the enemy.

[*Ghair Muslimom se Ta'aluqat Aur Unke Huqooq*, pp. 276-278]



How to Break the Ice?

A SUMMARY OF whatever has been discussed in the preceding pages would be:

- The Muslims have been assigned the task of calling everyone towards Islam in their individual and collective capacities.
- They should have a profound realisation of their position and responsibility as ambassadors and propagators of Islam.
- They have been assigned this great task by God Himself.
- Not all fellow countrymen are adversaries, enemies or opponents of Muslims; they are their brothers and compatriots.
- Many fellow countrymen are seeking God and inquisitive for the truth.
- The Muslims should feel concerned of their fate in the Hereafter, lest they be made to enter hellfire on account of being deprived of monotheistic faith and being engrossed in polytheism.

In order to convincingly and completely convey the message of Islam to them, it is very important for healthy relations to exist between the Muslims and their fellow countrymen.

The Prophet's ﷺ concern and anxiousness over the people's refusal to accept his call and their consequent loss in the hereafter has been portrayed in the following ayaat:

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا

"O Prophet! You would probably kill yourself to death, through grief over their refusal to accept the message." [Al-Kahf 18:6]

فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَتٍ

"Do not let yourself perish over them in regret." [Fatir 35:8]

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ

"Not upon you is the responsibility of their guidance, it is rather God who guides whom He wills". [Al-Baqarah 2:272]

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ

بِالْهُتَدَىٰ ۝٦١

"Indeed, you cannot guide whom you like, but God guides whom He wills". [Al-Qasas 28:56]

There is a Hadith which says:

'O people! I am trying to save you from falling into hellfire by holding on to your waists, and you are bent upon falling into that fire on account of your polytheism and disbelief.' [Bukari and Muslim]

It is part of the concern we should have for our fellow countrymen that we should convey to them the message of Islam in order to save them from hellfire. We should also pray in all earnest that God guides them to the truth. This is not possible until we establish relations with them. This is all the more important in order to gain their proximity and fulfil the obligations of concern we ought to have for them. Opportunities for discussions and presenting them with the teachings of Islam arise only after such relations have been established. Our attitude, morals and etiquettes would also be helpful in making them cognizant of Islamic teachings. This cognizance would bring them closer to Islam. So you should now focus on establishing these relations. There are certain important things

in life which we find ourselves reluctant at doing, but we still perform them. Their need and benefits are so obvious that we cannot be denied or ignored. Establishing contacts with fellow countrymen is one such task. Because the Muslims have maintained distances for centuries together, harboured certain misunderstandings in their regard and erected mental and psychological barriers, they do not seem very much inclined towards this important task. However, the need of the hour, the obligation of propagating Islam, the progress and development of the nation and our salvation in the hereafter compels us to have a rethink on this matter.

Establishing contacts is not a herculean task; it is rather easy. It should follow a natural course. You should be rest assured that our fellow countrymen- with whom we are supposed to establish contacts- feel happy when met, appreciate this gesture and do not feel offended at all. There have also been certain instances where the fellow countrymen have developed such deep relations with the Muslims that they have begun consulting them on their personal and domestic affairs as well.

It is you who would have to break the ice. It would be naïve to assume that some fellow countryman would reach out to you and initiate a conversation. You can choose a suitable person from your colony or a colleague at your office to establish contacts with. Start with a mutual introduction. Keep meeting them at regular intervals. Between the lines, discuss Islam with them. Give them a simple book on Islam to ensure further discussion. You should also gift them a concise book on *Seerah* (the Prophet's biography). It would be advisable to include topics like monotheism, polytheism and the hereafter in your first meeting. Fellow countrymen tend to like such discussions and take interest in them. It can also be that this would be your first and last meeting with that person. If this is the case, and you feel you would not be able to meet him again, it would be

advisable to explain in brief the concepts of monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter, and what is expected of a person who believes in them. Ideas like polytheism, reincarnation and rebirth should also be falsified in this meeting itself.

Or it may so happen that you meet someone in a journey, in a school/college, a hospital, a bus depot or a railway station. If you engage in a mutual introduction and establish contact with them on such occasions, such contacts can be developed into long-term relations. So, one should make use of such unplanned opportunities as well.

Some people might have a query in this regard. After the message of Islam has been conveyed to a fellow countryman and there has been a detailed discussion on Islamic teachings with him, what Islamic topic should be discussed in subsequent meetings? It should be understood here that it is not at all necessary to bring Islam into the discussion in each and every meeting. It has already been written earlier that sharing their joys and sorrows and quoting a relevant ayah or a Hadith while participating in their happy and sad moments is also a form of Dawah. Your overall attitude, etiquette and character are all forms of Dawah. Take an interest in their issues and advise them on their problems, provide them with booklets and folders. Let this practice remain uninterrupted, for all this is nothing but Dawah. In short, it is important that we maintain continuous relations with fellow countrymen, irrespective of whether they accept Islam or not. If you are associated with an Islamic organisation or institution, you can also invite them to attend its programmes.

Whatever has been discussed till now dealt with establishing contacts with fellow countrymen on an individual basis. But

establishing relations between your families also has its fair share of benefits. Allow me to offer a few tips in this regard.

Establishing Relations Between Families

It would seem awkward these days for a Muslim person to take his family to visit a non-Muslim family or meet them in order to establish contacts with them. But maintaining relations at the family level is especially advantageous. This is a sure way of dispelling doubts and misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims. If Muslims succeed in establishing family contacts with the fellow countrymen residing in their locality, colony, village and town, sectarian forces would fail in their divisive plans. Such relations would also ensure peace and security. It is the ardent desire of sectarian and communal organisations that Muslims and fellow countrymen should stay away from each other; that they should never unite. Simply put, their plan is to isolate the Muslims.

Establishing contacts at the family level is a very easy task. You begin by establishing contacts on a personal individual basis. In order to take them to the family level, it is necessary for you to make your family members understand the need and importance of this gesture. They should be mentally prepared to do so within the Islamic framework.

After having established contacts between families, members of both families would frequent each other's homes. We should, however, take our precautions against participating in their pagan customs when we are invited to their festivals. It is also important to refrain from eating those foodstuffs which have been dedicated to their false deities. When confronted with such situations, they should be told about Islam's monotheistic teachings. The disadvantages of polytheism should be explained to them and the reason why you do not partake in foodstuffs

dedicated to idols should be made clear to them. Having done so, you can expect them to understand your reservations. They do not force you against your will. Because you have already explained to them the reasons for your disengagement, misunderstandings do not creep in, and they do not feel offended either.

Once family contacts become strong enough, you gain an opportunity to advise them on their issues and problems. Today, every person is concerned with his own self. Materialism and selfishness has reached such despicable levels that children are abandoning their parents in old age homes, where they are left to die. Families are breaking down, homes are collapsing. Empathising with fellow countrymen in such tumultuous times, saying a nice word and rendering selfless service would certainly go a long way.

Apart from dispelling misunderstandings and misgivings about Islam and Muslims, establishing family relations would pave the way for effectively conveying the message of Islam to them. The younger generation of our fellow countrymen are usually disinterested in the religion of their forefathers. If presented well, they get really impressed with Islam.

We should also take certain precautions in this regard. Our attitude while participating in their festivals has already been mentioned above. It is alright if you refrain from attending their festivals to protect yourself from being a part of their pagan activities. But this needs to be conveyed to them in a friendly and gentle manner. It would, however, be appropriate to visit them on the second or third day, after all their religious rites have been completed. This is the right time to explain the implications of monotheism to them and to warn them of the consequences of associating others with God.

The second is that they do not adhere to the veil or follow any segregation of the sexes in their gatherings. This gives us an opportunity to introduce the social etiquette taught by Islam. You should shed some light on important contemporary issues like the status of the veil and the woman wearing it, her right and the Islamic family system. They would certainly be impressed with these teachings, because there is no other culture or ideology or philosophy present today on the face of the earth which upholds such rational values.

If you notice that the TV is on and some inappropriate programme or film is being shown, you should politely ask them to switch it off. It should not happen that you too start watching indecent stuff.

While conversing with them, they may put forth the idea that all religions are equally true, that these are but various ways to reach the same destination. Obviously, this is not true, and it needs to be falsified on the basis of sound arguments, employing wisdom and a gradual and gentle approach. However, this should not be allowed to pass by either. Your silence at this point would be taken as your affirmation to the idea that 'all religions are one and the same'. Kindly refer to my book on this topic* for some detailed arguments in this regard.



* *Wahdat-e-Adyan ki Haqiqat*

Relations With Fellow Countrymen

In the light of Hadith and the Prophetic example

WE HAVE ALREADY discussed some points on establishing relations with fellow countrymen in light of the Qur'an in the preceding chapters. The ahadith of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also contain valuable guidance in this regard, and certain episodes from the Prophet's life help us in getting a clear understanding of Islam's approach. Allow me to share with you a few aHadith and some relevant episodes from the Prophet's life.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"You would not be complete believers unless you have mercy on each other. The Companions asked, 'O Messenger of God, each of us is merciful'. The Prophet replied, 'I do not mean to say that you should be merciful to your fellow companions, what I am referring to is a general universal mercy.'"

[Mustadrak Hakim, Vol 4, p. 167]

This means that mercy is an important part of faith. If this is not met, a person's faith remains inadmissible. What the Prophet meant to say was that a Muslim should treat every human being with kindness and mercy, being their sincere well-wishers and empathisers. This requires us to have contacts and relations with them.

In another Hadith, the Prophet says:

"Do not cut off relations with each other. Do not turn your faces away from each other (in contempt). Do not have rancour for anyone in your hearts. Do not envy each other. Rather, live as God's servants and as each other's brethren." [Tirmizi]

"Like for others what you like for your own selves; only then would you be Muslims."

In another Hadith, it is said:

Like for your neighbour that which you like for yourself. [Tirmizi]

"All forms of creation constitute the family of God. The best person in His eyes is the one who is kind to His family." [Tabrani, Baihaqi]

At the time of Tahajjud, the Prophet ﷺ would raise his index finger to the skies and say:

"O God! I bear witness that You alone are worthy of worship, and You have no partner in divinity. I also bear witness that all the people living on earth are your slaves and they are brothers unto each other."

In a Hadith Qudsi, the Prophet quotes God as saying:

On the Day of Judgement, God would say: 'O son of Adam! I fell sick, but you did not visit Me'. The person would submit: 'My Lord, how could I have paid You a visit when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' God would reply: 'Did you not know that a certain slave of Mine had fallen ill? But you did not visit him. If you would have visited him, you would have found Me beside him.' God would say: 'O son of Adam! I asked you for food, but you refused to offer Me any food'. The person would submit: 'My Lord, how could I have fed You when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' God would reply: 'A certain slave of Mine had asked you for food. But you did not feed him. If you would have fed him, you would have found it with Me'. God would then say: 'O son of Adam! I asked you for water, but you refused to give Me water'. The person would submit:

'My Lord, how could I have offered You water, when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' God would reply: 'A certain slave of Mine had asked you for water, but you refused. Had you offered him water, you would have found it with Me.' [Sahih Muslim]

Maulana Abdullah Jolam Umari has presented the prophetic example in this regard in the following words:

"Islam's teachings on this subject were not merely theoretical in nature; the Prophet has demonstrated them in his blessed life. The Prophet established relations with non-Muslims, acted kindly with them, benefitted them, invited them to accept Islam, and accepted the pledges of those non-Muslims who expressed their desire to embrace Islam. Plenty of such examples can be found in the Hadith and the biography of the Prophet.

The Prophet ﷺ had close relations with the polytheist pagans. Accordingly, he accepted gifts offered to him by the polytheists and presented them with gifts as well.

It should also be kept in mind that the actual purpose of developing relations with non-Muslims is to invite them towards Islam. We should make use of these relations and invite them to Islam at every available opportunity. The Prophet shared a very special relation with his uncle, Abu Talib who happened to be a polytheist and he also had good relations with a Jewish slave who used to serve him. The Prophet made use of these relations and invited them to Islam. The Prophet asked Abu Talib to accept Islam even on his deathbed, but he remained deprived of God's grace. In contrast, when the Prophet asked his Jewish slave to accept Islam at a time when the boy was in the throes of death, he received God's grace and accepted Islam." [Mahnama Raahe Aetedaal, June 2016, pp. 75-76]



Fellow Countrymen And Human Rights

ISLAM IS A COMPLETE system of life. God has chosen Islam as the preferred way for all human beings. It is a distinct feature of Islam that it has stipulated rights not only for its followers, but even for those who do not follow it. Islam has based human rights on man's dignified status, his inherent honour and his position of being God's vicegerent on earth. Hence, these rights cover each and every aspect of human life. No other ideology or philosophy can attain this level. In an Islamic state, man does not have to apply for these rights, nor does he have to struggle for them. The Creator has Himself bestowed these rights upon man. Usurping these rights or denying them is akin to revolting against the Creator of this universe. Thus, oppression and injustice, and engineering riots and corruption are the greatest crimes against humanity.

There is a lot of talk about human rights these days, but it is also a fact that they are also being violated. This has deprived man of his honour and dignity. While a lot of importance is being attached to human rights in contemporary times, the question that needs to be asked is whether they are being implemented or not. The human rights of minorities, the weaker sections of society, women and the socially and economically deprived classes are being blatantly violated everywhere.

The Constitution of Madinah drafted by the Prophet ﷺ and his sermon during the Farewell Hajj are jointly recognised as the

first Charter of Human Rights in history. The most important aspect of these declarations is that their clauses were not just valid on paper; rather, the Messenger of God ﷺ actually granted those human rights to all the citizens of Madinah and the entire Arabian Peninsula. The religious minorities enjoyed all the rights. Immediate notice of any violation of human rights by the individual, society or state was taken and the usurped rights were duly restored. This remained so during the reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. As the Caliphate gave way to Monarchy, this ideal situation saw a gradual decline. However, even at its nadir, the Muslims and their rulers treated the minorities very kindly.

A large majority of our fellow countrymen do not harbour a negative image of Muslims in their minds. They do not have any feeling of hatred or enmity against Muslims. There is just a small population that lives with these feelings, much of which has to do with misunderstandings and misgivings. If these are dispelled, the hatred and enmity seen in this miniscule population can also be extinguished to a good extent. However, for this to happen, it is necessary for the Muslims to honour and respect the human rights of all human beings. It is not at all appropriate to breed feelings of hostility and vengeance against those who are non-violent. The examples of the Prophet and the Companions show us that they used to make attempts and pray for the guidance of even the worst of their enemies.

Maulana Shah Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi writes:

“The entire system of this world is based upon the implementation and protection of human rights and duties. What rights is a man entitled to and what are his duties towards society? And to what extent are they obliged to fulfil them? Some of them are fundamental rights, having specified injunctions and which have a bearing on the success of the

entire society. If they are not implemented, the entire social structure would collapse. These include establishment of justice, eradication of tyranny and oppression, protection of human life and property, honour and dignity.

[Deen-e-Rahmat, p. 60]

Islam has not made any distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims in granting most of these rights. Even in case of enemies and opponents, guidelines have been issued to treat them with equity and justice, and that one should refrain from being unjust towards them.

God says:

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ اَنْ صَدُّوْكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اَنْ تَعْتَدُوْا وَتَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوْا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝

“And let not the hatred of some people in once shutting you out of the Masjid alHaram lead you to transgression and hostility (on your part). Help one another in righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and transgression. Fear God, for God is strict in punishment.”

[Al-Maidah 5:2]

There is no doubt that permission has indeed been granted to avenge injustice and oppression, but the victim has been given the option of either avenging the wrong done to him or forgiving the convict. However, replying to injustice and oppression with reciprocal injustice and oppression is not allowed.

The Muslims interact with fellow countrymen on a day-to-day basis. Business transactions, buying and selling, promises and agreements, relations with neighbours, tenants and customers, health and educational institutions- they all provide

opportunities for mutual interaction. They also accompany each other on a temporary or short-term basis. On all such occasions, Muslims should behave with them in a manner expected with a fellow human being.

Just to get an overview, we present here the guidelines issued by the Prophet ﷺ about how we should treat our neighbours:

Abu Shuraih narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once exclaimed in an assertive voice: By God, he is not a believer (and he repeated this sentence thrice). He was asked: O Messenger of God, who is not a believer? He replied: He, whose neighbour is not safe from his bad behaviour. [Bukhari]

Abu Zarr narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said: O Abu Zarr, when you cook meat, add some water to it to increase the gravy so that you can give some of it to your neighbours.

[Al-Adab al-Mufrad, ref: Deen Rahmat, p. 164]

Along with the individuals, Islam has also mentioned certain rights of the society. Abu Saeed Khudri narrates that the Prophet once instructed:

“Refrain from sitting on the roadside”. The Companions submitted, “We have no other option but to sit here; this is our meeting place and we speak to each other here.” The Prophet said, “If you feel it is necessary for you to sit here, fulfil the rights of the road”. The Companions asked about the rights they owe to the road. The Prophet told them, “Lowering your gaze, not troubling anyone, replying to greetings, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong.” [Bukhari and Muslim]

While explaining this Hadith, Maulana Jalaluddin Umari writes:

“This Hadith tells us that a Muslim should always be observant of the responsibilities he owes to the society- be it on the streets, in the markets, in meetings or in gatherings. He is obligated with the honour and

dignity of other people. He is not allowed to put lecherous glances on anyone. He has been created to alleviate the problems of other people; he should not be the cause of inconvenience to others instead- like obstructing the path, littering around, quarrelling with travellers, using foul language etc. He should save himself from doing anything that would cause trouble to others on the street. He should quickly reply to greetings of peace and security offered to him by anyone so that the latter feels secure and comfortable. Also, while sitting there, he should enjoin righteousness upon others and prevent them from doing wrong. Such a society would develop and progress and it would remain protected from all evil. One more right the road is entitled to is that man should not use foul language or harsh words. Rather, his approach should be a reflection of modesty and dignity, and he should use gentle words while speaking to others. This would put an end to many of the feuds and chaotic exchanges that are usually witnessed in markets. Helping the distressed and guiding those who have lost their way are also a part of his responsibilities.” [Islam mein Khidmat-e-Khalq ka Tasavvur, pp. 27-28]

An Islamic government, wherever it comes to be established, would also be obligated with these human rights.

The Christians of Najran held the status of a religious minority. The rights the Prophet ﷺ had granted them were those that even the most civilized of today's governments have failed to grant their religious minorities. Similarly, we cannot even imagine the rights that had been granted to the religious minority of Madinah (the Jews) and the non-Muslim tribes by the erstwhile Constitution of Madinah. These rights were not just in the form of treaties; rather, the Messenger of God ﷺ had implemented them in the capacity of being the Head of State.

Among the many rights that the fellow countrymen enjoy, an important right is the protection of their lives and properties. Maulana Muhammad Muneeruddin Umari writes:

"Just as it has in the case of Muslims, Islam has guaranteed the protection of the lives and properties of non-Muslims as well. No Muslim is entitled to damage the life or property of any non-Muslim without just cause. Islamic law has severely reprimanded such offenders."

The Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

"Beware! Whoever harms a muahid (a non-Muslim person who has been protected by treaty), violates his rights, or burdens him beyond his capacity or takes away something from him without his express consent, I would argue on his behalf against that offender on the Day of Judgement."

[Abu Dawood, Kitabul Kharaj]

In another Hadith, the Prophet has been quoted saying:

"Whoever killed a muahid would not get even as much as a whiff of Paradise, despite the fact that the fragrance of Paradise can be felt from a distance equal to forty years of journey."

[Sahih Bukhari, Kitabul Jizyah; Bandon ke Huqooq, p. 118]

These teachings of Islam show us that Muslims are related to non-Muslims by the thread of humanity. The Muslims also share with them various other bonds which have been discussed in the previous pages. Thus, it is imperative for us to fulfil their human rights. We cannot treat them with unreasonable hatred and contempt. Apart from being against the basic tenets of Islam, such a negative approach by the Muslims would only increase their hatred and enmity for us. Even if a group within them exhibits an approach of hatred and enmity against the Muslims and violates their rights, the correct Islamic approach for the Muslims would still be to fulfil the rights of the other fellow countrymen, treat them kindly and exhibit good behaviour and pray for the guidance of them all.

The Qur'an gives glad tidings to those Muslims who adopt such an attitude:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

"Goodness and evil are not alike. Repel the evil with what is better. Then, the two of you- between whom was hatred- would become as if you were intimate friends." [HaMeem Sajdah 41: 34]

How should we deal with those who harbour hatred and enmity against Muslims and, hence, oppress and harm the Muslims? The Qur'an answers this question by means of an example:

إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمِعُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾ قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَلَيْتُ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

'For me, I have believed in your Lord, so listen to me'. It was said, 'Enter Paradise'. He said, 'I wish my people could know how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honoured'. [YaSeen 36: 25-27]

While explaining this ayat, Malik Habibullah writes:

"A servant of God bravely proclaimed before its wayward community: Hearken, I have believed in your Lord. In reply, the people of his community murdered him. At this, God asked him to enter Paradise. But the martyred servant did not seek any vengeance, nor did he pay any attention to the fact that his people had murdered him and wish that his murderers should be punished by God. Even after being killed, he is preoccupied with concern for his people. He is hoping if his people would somehow come to know how well his Lord has treated him- how He has forgiven him and let him among those He has honoured, so that they might also tread the same path and become deserving of the Lord's

forgiveness and felicitation. Look, how God Almighty has filled his loyal and distinguished servants' hearts with the love of His other servants!

The Muslims should make a resolve that they too would establish such selfless brotherly relations with their non-Muslim brethren on a large scale which would be based on pure intentions, that they would share their joys and sorrows and that they would try to solve their common problems and issues together. Our relations with them should be expressed on occasions of joy and on occasions of sorrow too. We should participate in their moments of joy, like the birth of a child, weddings etc., and gift them with appropriate presents. On occasions of sorrow, like death, sickness and accidents, we should share their grief. We should offer them a word of empathy, some physical service and financial aid. As for those rituals which are inappropriate and detestable from the Islamic point of view, we should politely excuse ourselves from participating in them." [Insani Ukhuwwat, pp. 13-14]



Fellow Countrymen And Social Service

WHENEVER THE WORDS, 'social service' are spoken among Muslims, it is almost always the Muslim beneficiaries who are kept in mind. It is for them alone that charitable programmes are chalked out. It is very rare for Muslims to think about performing charitable acts for their fellow countrymen, despite the fact that Islam teaches us to selflessly serve all mankind and its objective is no other than seeking the pleasure of the Lord and success in the Hereafter. Islam has not made any distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims (fellow countrymen) in many areas of social service; it has rather made it quite universal. However, the Muslim community is granted preference because of certain underlying reasons and conditions. In our discussion on human rights, we have seen that there is a clear mention of the human rights of fellow countrymen in Islamic teachings. Similarly, social service does not just involve the service of Muslims alone; rather, it is a service meant for all deserving people, irrespective of their religion, creed, race, colour, language and place of origin.

When Archangel Gabriel brought down the first revelation, the Prophet ﷺ naturally got scared. He ran home and related the incident to his dear wife, Khadija (May God be pleased with her). She comforted him and said: "Do not feel scared, for God would not embarrass you; for you help the distressed, the widows and the orphans, you are kind to the pitiful, you take care of the helpless and oppressed, you entertain guests and always speak the truth."

[Bukhari]

There are many places in the Qur'an where the command to worship God has been clubbed with the instruction to serve mankind. Encouraging others to serve others has also been spoken of as an act of virtue.

God says:

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا ۖ إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ
لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا ۝٩١

"And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan and the captive, saying: We feed you for the sake of God alone. Neither do we ask any reward for it, nor even a word of thanks. We only fear a Day of distressful wrath from our Lord."

[Ad-Dahr 76: 8-10]

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, God says:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالذِّينِ ۖ ۝١ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ ۖ ۝٢ وَلَا
يَحْضُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ ۖ ۝٣

"Have you seen the one who denies the (Day of) Judgement? Then such is the one who repulses the orphan, and does not encourage the feeding of the indigent."

[Al-Ma'oon 107: 1-3]

Also,

فِي جَنَّاتٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ۖ ۝٣٠ عَنِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ۖ ۝٣١ مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ ۖ ۝٣٢
قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ ۖ ۝٣٣ وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمِ الْمِسْكِينَ ۖ ۝٣٤

"(The companions of the Right Hand who will be) in Gardens will question each other, and ask of the sinners, 'What led you into the Hellfire?' They will say, 'We were not among those who prayed, nor were we of those who fed the indigent.'"

[Al-Muddaththir 74:40-44]

We have already quoted the Hadith Qudsi in which:

On the Day of Judgement, God would say: 'O son of Adam! I fell sick, but you did not visit Me'. The person would submit: 'My Lord, how could I have paid You a visit when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' God would reply: 'Did you not know that a certain slave of Mine had fallen ill? But you did not visit him. If you would have visited him, you would have found Me beside him.' God would say: 'O son of Adam! I asked you for food, but you refused to offer Me any food'. The person would submit: 'My Lord, how could I have fed You when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' God would reply: 'A certain slave of Mine had asked you for food. But you did not feed him. If you would have fed him, you would have found it with Me'. God would then say: 'O son of Adam! I asked you for water, but you refused to give Me water'. The person would submit: 'My Lord, how could I have offered You water, when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' God would reply: 'A certain slave of Mine had asked you for water, but you refused. Had you offered him water, you would have found it with Me.' [Sahih Muslim]

This Hadith tells us that selfless service to mankind is actually service to God.

In light of these teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith, it becomes imperative for the Muslims to comfort those who are in need. If any person in our neighbourhood or our contact or even a stranger requires something, we ought to help him out. If he is hungry, feed him or encourage others to do so. Offer water to those who are thirsty. Visit the sick, enquire about their wellbeing and offer them medical aid. Provide clothes to those who do not have any. If someone is in trouble, try to solve his issues. If someone is in need of a sincere advice, give it to him. Provide emergency relief and aid if and when required. It should not be that only community programmes of social service are conducted and all social work is restricted to these

public endeavours. Rather, the Qur'an and Hadith oblige the Muslims to carry out various forms of social work among fellow countrymen on the individual and family level in a very natural and casual way.

I would take this opportunity to mention a few practical examples of social work as well. We get some moments with fellow countrymen during our journeys. Such opportunities are also made available in hospitals, educational institutes, railway stations, bus stops, banks, offices etc. We should try our best to offer our services to fellow countrymen on such occasions. For example, you can offer them your seat or accommodate them on your seat, offer them some water on a sunny day, help them with their luggage, share your food with them, offer them tea, help them with their tasks etc. All these things can be done quite easily and they leave a very positive impression behind.

In the same way, we should mete out good treatment to our neighbours and be of assistance to them. It is very rare for a Muslim to pay a courtesy visit to his sick neighbour if he happens to be a fellow countryman or financially help him with his treatment, or attend his funeral services/ condolence meet to express grief, or empathise with him if a calamity befalls him. But the biography of the Prophet ﷺ tells us that he did all of these.

